

Community Preservation Act Committee

Meeting Minutes

February 2, 2017

7:00 pm

Lyons Hearing Room, Town Hall 2nd Floor (*recorded by ACMi)

In attendance were: Clarissa Rowe
Eric Helmuth
Kin Lau
JoAnn Robinson
David Levy
Richard Murray
Charles Tirone
Leslie Mayer (arrived at 7:24pm)
Andrew Bengtson (Arrived at 7:35pm)

Also in attendance: Jim Feeney

1. **Introduction:** Clarissa Rowe opened the meeting at 7:05pm and explained the session would begin with Pamela Hallett, Executive Director of the Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA), presenting on two different applications. CPAC members in attendance provided introductions and affiliations.
2. **Presentation for 20 Westminster Avenue:** Pam Hallett first discussed the redevelopment of 20 Westminster Ave, which was originally a parish house for the United Methodist Church. It has seen many uses since being built, including a pre-school and adult day care center. This development will include 9 units of affordable housing, including wheelchair accessible units, for residents at 60% or below median area income. The request is for \$500,000 to close out project funding. Ms. Hallett discussed other funding sources obtained, including \$100,000 in historic tax credits received to date. Future applications for additional tax credits will be submitted. Ms. Hallett stated 3 units will be for homeless or formerly homeless persons to be managed by the Somerville Homeless Coalition. This will be the third project in the working relationship between the two agencies. Ms. Hallett provided an operating pro forma and rental information. Building plans are 99% complete and construction is slated to begin in the summer.

Eric Helmuth asked if the affordable housing units offered to the Somerville Homeless Coalition clients will count towards Arlington's 10% affordable housing calculation. Pam Hallett answered the residents are not always from outside of Arlington, but either way all 9 units and the entire land area will count towards the calculation of affordable housing stock.

Kin Lau asked if this was a friendly 40B development. Pam Hallett discussed having to show exactly what historic features were being preserved, ensuring trash receptacles were appropriately placed as well as ensuring the air conditioning units could not be seen. Kin Lau follow-up by asking whether parking would be an issue, which Ms. Hallett stated was resolved via a parking study they conducted.

David Levy talked about starting the project without all project funding being sourced. Pam Hallett discussed Brookline Bank's willingness to sponsor the project and provide gap funding as necessary. It would be used as final part of funding that could be replaced before completion of the project when additional tax credits are received.

Clarissa Rowe asked Pam Hallett to confirm whether this project was the Housing Corporation of Arlington's priority application for funding. Ms. Hallett confirmed this since the construction will begin soon.

3. **Presentation for Downing Square:** Pamela Hallett then discussed the application for the development at Downing Square. This application is for \$500,000 and the project is still in pre-development phase. A substantial CDBG commitment has been made by the Town, which has been used for environmental testing at the site that identified PCE and VOCs. The North Suburban Consortium has committed 2.5 million to the project already. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will be reconsidering this application in March, which is impacted by the recent precipitous drop in the value of tax credits. In the worst case scenario, HCA would have to wait a year and apply again.

Eric Helmuth spoke about the committee's need to be responsible with funds whereby this project is in very early stages. Ms. Hallett talked about needing 7-10 funding sources for this project, and the difficulty of navigating the different application period timelines. The CPAC commitment period may be too late if not funded this year, especially as there is no guarantee to receive funding this year or next from DHCD. Eric Helmuth acknowledged the complexity of the project and asked if a grant agreement or commitment with strict contingencies on funding would be sufficient. Pam Hallett was unsure to what extent the CPA funds can be used for pre-development of housing.

Kin Lau asked if this funding would be used solely for Downing Square. Pam Hallett said that she hopes to come back to the committee in a year to request funds for the Broadway project. Ms. Hallett stated both projects will proceed at same pace, but Downing Square has environmental issues to be resolved first.

Clarissa Rowe further discussed the possibility of a grant agreement of commitment that speaks to funding being returned if project falls through so the Town is protected. Clarissa likened this to historical preservation commitment made by other project applications. Pam Hallett stated she could have an attorney work on language of such an agreement.

4. **Presentation for Historic Resource Inventory:** Clarissa Rowe introduced the Department of Planning and Community Development for two interesting project applications. Nat Strosberg discussed the application to update the Historic Resources Inventory on behalf of the Cultural Resources Working Group, which represents various entities. The request is for \$66,000 in CPA funding. Mr. Strosberg spoke about the abundance of historical buildings, structures, landscapes and districts in Town. The current inventory is outdated and contains many errors and omissions. It is important to update this inventory as development is continuing in Town, including demolitions and address changes. The inventory serves as a foundation for the Master Plan and updated information will be available. In addition to capturing previously undocumented resources such as fire stations and other unlisted spaces, the project will also ultimately include a survey master plan and the completion of a historic structure report for

Arlington High School that identified character defining features. Nat discussed project timelines and costs. It will cost \$220 per record in the inventory. A survey master plan is estimated at \$35,000 and the report for Arlington High School is estimated at \$30,000, for a total project cost of \$121,000. Larson Fisher Associates is the consultant who provided the estimates.

Eric Helmuth asked if there would be separate consultants during the various phases. Mr. Strosberg answered there could be, but it would be preferable to work with one consultant such as Larson Fisher Associates for the duration of the project.

JoAnn Robinson stated there are other threatened areas in Town that should be evaluated, such as East Arlington, where there hasn't been as much preservation effort. Jenny Raitt discussed working in consultation with all necessary groups as project moves forward.

Clarissa Rowe mentioned that later parts of the project can come back, including historic landscapes. Nat Strosberg states they will come back after each facet is finished. Clarissa states committee would also support future applications to continue updating the survey.

Leslie Mayer asked about deliverables from the historic structure report at the high school, and how it will inform renovation. Nat Strosberg stated this will identify historically and architecturally significant features and components. Leslie Mayer asked if Permanent Town Building Committee and School Department are aware of this project. Nat Strosberg stated he has only been in talks with Historic Resources Working Group. Jenny Raitt mentioned the Town Manager is aware of this project. Clarissa Rowe stated CPA funding will be able to be used for renovating historic parts of high school building. Jenny Raitt spoke to the report providing recommendations for historically sensitive renovations.

Andrew Bengtson asked if high school is on the registry. Nat Strosberg answered this survey will promote its placement on the survey. Andrew questioned if this means renovations will need to comply with Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

Leslie asked if the front lawn will be included in the survey. Jenny Raitt said this will need to be determined. Leslie Mayer then asked whether public parks will be included as part of this project. Jenny Raitt stated that this may not be a first round priority given budget constraints.

5. **Presentation for Whittemore Park Revitalization:** Jenny Raitt presented the project application for the revitalization of Whittemore Park. The .3 acre park was created by the ARB in 1979 as part of larger Arlington center project. It is currently underutilized. Initially, the park was envisioned as a town common/ town green. In 1998 the park was redesigned in the style of a New England town common. Designers attempted to represent 3 different centuries within the park, which included moving the Jefferson cutter house to the park. A preservation restriction was placed on the property in 1990, and in 1992 it was placed on historic register. Planned improvements to the park are conceptual at this time and coincide with phase II of the Mass Ave Reconstruction project, though hardscape improvements are not likely to be funded by MassDOT. The goal of the project is to revitalize this space for community arts and activities. Initial improvements will include new signage, tree work, and installation of bike racks and removal of the granite & pipe fence. The request is for \$50,000 of a total project cost of \$66,500. A planning dialogue would continue to create a gathering place for civic connectivity.

Clarissa Rowe asked about order of operations for this project. Clarissa believes the planning should happen before the physical improvements to ensure the program of the space is met. There is a need to look closely at what makes a town common. Clarissa acknowledged the chairful art program and tree lighting were very successful. Jenny Raitt asked is it would be possible to switch gears to get a planning grant, even though it is different from the original application. Clarissa said that would be possible and will help ensure this park works for the Town.

JoAnn Robinson would like to see real thoughtful look at this space to ensure it gets utilized more. She agreed the different pieces of the park lead to a disjointed experience. Leslie Mayer stated she looked at application and did not think of this space as recreational, but instead historic, but after taking a step back this space has great potential as a gathering space. Andrew Bengtson echoed sentiments of potential for the space. A study I appropriate to ensure bike racks are not put in only to be removed down the road. Eric Helmuth discussed the planning study is keeping to spirit and intent of original application. Kin Lau offered that particular attention is paid to the edges of the space. Clarissa Rowe agreed the post and rail fence should be looked at closely.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.